

Zorba the Buddha: The Body, Sacred Space, and Late Capitalism in the Osho International Meditation Resort

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This paper examines the role of the body and sacred space in the Osho International Meditation Resort in Pune, India.¹ Known in his early years as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Osho was among the most popular and controversial global gurus of the 20th century, creating an extremely successful transnational spiritual movement that spread from India to the United States and back to India again. Central to Osho's teachings is his ideal of "Zorba the Buddha," the fully integrated individual who unites the spirituality of the Buddha with the sensuality and physicality of Zorba the Greek. Combining a highly romanticized vision of the "spiritual Orient" with the atmosphere of an expensive international luxury hotel, the Osho resort thus offers profound insight into the changing configurations of sacred space and bodily practice in the context of globalization and late capitalism.

I am a materialist-spiritualist...I teach a sensuous religion. I want Gautam the Buddha and Zorba the Greek to come closer and closer, my disciple has to be Zorba the Buddha. Man is body-soul together. Both have to be satisfied.

— Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Joshi 1982, 1)

Every year thousands of people visit this luxurious resort...The atmosphere is really like a fairy tale. A paradise where all your emotional, bodily and spiritual needs are met.

— *Elle Magazine* (Osho.com 2013)

Max Weber's famous metaphor in *The Protestant Ethic* of religion striding into the marketplace of worldly affairs and slamming the monastery door behind it becomes further transformed in modern society with religion placed very much in the consumer marketplace alongside other meaning complexes.

— Mike Featherstone, *Postmodernism and Consumer Culture* (1991, 110-11)

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Tucked into the heart of the green and wealthy residential neighborhood of Koregaon Park in the Indian city of Pune, surrounded by enormous banyan trees and towering stands of bamboo, lies the Osho International Meditation Resort. All those who enter the walled and gated compound are required to pass an HIV test, wear special maroon and white robes, and observe specific rules of physical hygiene (such as no handling of paper currency). The focal points of the resort are a giant pyramid-shaped meditation hall—the space for morning and evening meditations—and a large open-air dance pavilion—the space for all variety of sacred and secular dance performances. Advertised as both a five-star luxury hotel and a spiritual retreat, offering a swimming pool and tennis courts as well as a wide range of meditative and therapeutic techniques, the resort is a striking example of the complex intersections between spirituality and transnational capitalism in the twenty-first century (Osho.com 2013; Urban 2005).

Known in his early years as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931-1990), Osho was among the most popular and controversial gurus of the last fifty years. Arguably the first truly “global guru” of the modern era, Osho created an extremely successful transnational spiritual movement that spread from India to the United States and back to India again, tracing a complex global circuit and attracting a huge international audience that flourishes to this day (Carter 1990; Urban 2005). Central to Osho’s teachings is his ideal of “Zorba the Buddha,” the fully integrated individual who combines the spirituality of the Buddha with the sensuality of Zorba the Greek (Osho 2000, 217). In large part, the unique sacrality of the space at the Osho resort is created through embodied practices, such as dancing, Osho’s technique of “dynamic meditation,” and his popular brand of “Neo-Tantra,” which reinterprets Hindu and Buddhist Tantra for a non-Indian audience and focuses primarily on sexual freedom. Combining a highly romanticized vision of the “spiritual Orient” (Urban 2003) with the atmosphere of an expensive international luxury hotel, the Osho resort thus offers profound insight into the changing configurations of sacred space and bodily practice in the context of globalization and late capitalism.

In this article, I will examine the intersections between the body, sacred space and transnational capitalism in the Osho resort, suggesting that this movement opens up much larger insights into the dynamics of global spirituality in the twenty-first century. At first glance, the Osho resort might not appear to be a “sacred space” in the sense of classic definitions of the phrase derived from scholars such as Mircea Eliade and his many students. As Eliade famously defined it, sacred space is a unique kind of space that is filled with being, power and existence: it is

“strong, significant,” it is the only *really* existing space, and it lies in fundamental contrast to profane ordinary space, which is “formless, amorphous, and without significance or ultimate reality” (1987, 20; see Jones 2000; Sullivan 1990). Indeed, the space of the Osho resort has many elements that would seem quite “profane” by Eliade’s standards, such as a huge outdoor dance floor, a Jacuzzi, a bar, and luxury accommodations. If we adopt a more nuanced and less rigid definition of sacred space, such as that of Jonathan Z. Smith, however, we can make more sense of the unique sort of space embodied in the Osho resort. As Smith describes it, sacred space is not so much a radically different kind of domain, but rather a kind of “*focusing lens*.” That is, it serves to frame and highlight what is most significant to a given religious community, while downplaying or minimizing what is secondary or accidental: “When one enters a temple, one enters a marked-off space in which, in principle, nothing is accidental: everything, at last potentially, is of significance. The temple serves as a *focusing lens*, marking and revealing significance” (1988, 54; see Brereton 2005). In Smith’s sense, then, the Osho resort is a very powerful kind of “sacred space”—an effective focusing lens that highlights the ideals most central to Osho’s own Zorba the Buddha philosophy. Indeed, it highlights in bold relief this community’s ideal of wedding body and spirit, its celebration of sensual pleasure as well as religious transcendence, and its unapologetic synthesis of spirituality with global tourism, big business, and consumer capitalism.

To conclude, I will suggest that the unique sort of sacred space embodied in the Osho resort also offers new ways of thinking about religion and globalization. While much of the literature on religion and globalization has tended to focus either on religious violence (particularly radical Islam) or on global forms of Christianity (such as Pentecostalism and Catholicism), the Osho resort is a key example of the many new global movements coming out of India and other parts of Asia (Srinivas 2008; Srinivas 2010). The Osho resort, I will suggest, is neither a mere local response to Western-style globalization nor simply a global movement emerging from South Asia; rather, borrowing a phrase from Arjun Appadurai (1996, 22-31), I will argue that this movement is better understood as a crucial *node* in a far more complex and fluid transnational network of people, ideas and capital now emanating from multiple sites across the globe. Indeed, the Osho movement is not only a transnational but also an explicitly “post-national movement,” in Appadurai’s sense (1996, 8-22). Yet with its fluid transnational organization and its unapologetic embrace of materialism, the Osho movement is also uniquely adapted to the

increasingly “de-territorialized” or “disorganized” nature of contemporary global capitalism (Harvey 1989; Jameson 1990).

From Sex Guru to Guru of the Rich: Osho-Rajneesh’s Early Life and Movement

“Rajneesh” Chandra Mohan Jain was born in Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh in 1931 and was raised by his elderly Jain grandparents. In 1953, while studying philosophy at Jabalpur University, Chandra Mohan claimed to have had a profound mystical experience and to have become spiritually enlightened at the age of twenty-one. Eventually, he would assume the title “Bhagwan” (“holy,” “sacred,” or “Lord”) and begin teaching a radically iconoclastic and parodic form of spirituality, known for his biting satire and his intentionally controversial, incendiary statements. Freely mixing ideas drawn from Asian sources such as Buddhism, Taoism and Tantra with modern psychological and philosophical sources such as Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, George Gurdjieff and Friedrich Nietzsche, Rajneesh was an intentionally eclectic, provocative, and often shocking public teacher. Perhaps the core of Rajneesh’s message is the belief that we have all in various ways been programmed or brainwashed by social institutions—by religions, family, education, politicians, media—and that by stripping away all of that conditioning, we can uncover our true inner nature, which is itself divine and identical with God (Rajneesh 1975, 7). As one follower put it:

You’re programmed by family, acquaintances, [and] institutions. Your mind is like a blackboard on which the rules and other programming are written. Bhagwan writes new rules on the blackboard, he tells you one thing is true and the next day that its opposite is true. He writes and writes new things on the blackboard of your mind until it is a ‘whiteboard.’ Then you have no programming left. Bhagwan frees the individual from all prior constraints and norms. (Carter, 1990, 48)

As part of his radical, parodic and iconoclastic teaching style, Rajneesh took a certain delight in attacking national and religious heroes and by deliberately provoking the powers that be. During the Gandhi Centenary year of 1968-69, for example, he delivered a series of lectures in which he denounced the Mahatma as a “masochist” who manipulated others by starving himself and a backwards reactionary who worshiped poverty, feared technology, and kept India chained to the past (Rajneesh 1983, 11-12; Gordon 1987, 26; Joshi 1982, 83). Rajneesh, however, would become even more infamous for his lectures on sexuality, which were

published in 1971 under the title *From Sex to Superconsciousness*. Openly attacking the sexual prudery of traditional Indian religions, Rajneesh celebrated sexuality as the most powerful drive in human existence and as a pathway to spiritual enlightenment (1971; see Osho 2000, 132). Eventually Rajneesh would promote his own version of Tantra or “Neo-Tantra,” focused primarily on the role of sexual liberation in spiritual development. While most traditional forms of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra have relatively little to say about sex—at least in the contemporary sense of sexual pleasure (Urban 2003)—Rajneesh was arguably the most important figure in the redefinition of Tantra as a kind of “spiritual sexualogy” and in its transmission to an eager American and European audience of spiritual consumers (Osho 2010; see Urban 2005).²

Rajneesh was also infamous for his attacks on socialism and for his open embrace of capitalism, as we see in works such as *Beware of Socialism* (based on talks delivered in 1970). Foreshadowing Reaganism and Thatcherism by a good ten years, Rajneesh decried socialism as a system rooted in the jealousy of the poor toward the more productive rich, and he praised capitalism as the most efficient means for creating general wealth: “Jealousy is at the root of the influence that socialism has in the world,” he warned, “Jealousy is its very foundation” (1978, 20). Meanwhile, capitalism is a “natural phenomenon,” based on the organic growth of labor into wealth when left unregulated by an overly paternalistic, interventionist state: “Capitalism is an instrument for converting labor into wealth. And if capitalism is allowed to grow unimpeded it can find ways to convert the entire labor of the country into wealth” (1978, 171-72).

In this sense, Rajneesh was also at the forefront of a larger shift in Indian attitudes during the 1970s, as many intellectuals and businessmen began to lose faith in the socialist and protectionist policies inherited from Nehru and began to show increasing enthusiasm for American-style capitalism. As Lise McKean notes in her study of modern Indian gurus,

[d]uring the 1970s and particularly during the 1980s, the private economic sector consisting of Indian and transnational corporations as well as

²Tantrikas have been watching the phenomenon of lovemaking closely, because they think, and they are right, that the greatest phenomenon on earth is love, and the greatest experience of humanity is orgasm. So if there is some truth, we must be closer to realizing that truth in the moment of orgasm than anywhere else. This is simple logic...this is our greatest joy, so this joy must somehow a door to the infinite” (Osho 2012, 112).

medium and small-scale industries and services expanded rapidly. The Indian state justified changes in policy with explanations based on economic rationalism. At the same time it reduced its reliance on socialism as a populist ideology. . . Pressured by coalitions of ruling-class groups, who wanted to compete more effectively in international markets as well as to expand their opportunities to invest capital in potentially profitable enterprises within India, the state formulated economic policies to support these goals. (McKean 1996, 6)

By the 1980s and 90s, India would be opening its doors ever wider to the global marketplace—a shift that Rajneesh had been calling for at least a decade earlier. Not surprisingly, Rajneesh was also supported during his early years in India by a group of wealthy businessmen and entrepreneurs, who welcomed his iconoclastic, anti-socialist and pro-capitalist message (Carter 1990, 44; Milne 1987, 19).

During the 1970s, Rajneesh moved from Mumbai to the quieter and cooler city of Pune (Poona), where he established an ashram and a thriving spiritual community. As James Gordon notes, the early Pune movement quickly began to attract a large following among the American and European tourists, spiritual seekers and hippies who were then flooding India. Emerging at the right place at the right time, the early Pune ashram combined the counter-cultural values of the 1960s and 70s with the ideals of sexual and political revolution and consumer capitalism:

The multinational and multiracial community that Rajneesh created in Poona was at once the response to the isolation and needs of those who came as disciples and the fulfillment of the utopian dreams and universalist hopes that pervaded the culture of the 1960s. It united...all the best features of capitalist creature comforts with the selfless sharing, the limitless sexual experimentation and the creative playfulness of the ideal – or idealized -- anarchist commune. (1987, 235)

Rajneesh achieved even greater fame and controversy after moving to the United States in the 1980s. Announcing himself as “the messiah America has been waiting for” (Milne 1987, 192), Rajneesh and his followers established an enormous and surprisingly successful utopian community in central Oregon. In its few years of existence between 1981 and 1985, the Rajneesh community—a utopian city dubbed “Rajneeshpuram”—became one of the wealthiest, most successful, but also scandal-ridden religious phenomena of the last century (Carter 1990). Known as the “Guru of the Rich” and the “Sex Guru,” Rajneesh

became infamous in the American media for his unapologetic display of wealth—such as his fleet of 93 Rolls Royces—and his open embrace of sexuality (Fitzgerald 1986).

The story of the Rajneesh community in Oregon and its unique sort of sacred space is surely worthy of a book-length study in its own right (see Carter 1990, Urban 2005), but a few details are worth mentioning here as background to the present community in Pune. Quickly growing into a remarkably successful spiritual and financial complex, Rajneeshpuram amassed some 130 million dollars during its five-year existence (Gordon 1987, 117). Meanwhile, Rajneesh's following had spread widely throughout North America, Europe and India, claiming over 25,000 members by the mid-1980s and growing into an enormously diverse, multifaceted and transnational business complex (Carter 1990, 85-87). A remarkable mixture of sacred and secular space, Rajneeshpuram was at once an ashram dedicated to what was called the "religion of Rajneeshism" and also a formally incorporated city, with its own government, security forces, sanitation, and other mundane services (Rajneesh Foundation International 1983; Fitzgerald 1986).

The collapse of the Oregon community, however, was even more rapid and spectacular than its rise to success. The group quickly came into conflict with the local residents of Antelope's small retirement community, taking over the local city council and mayor's office, and eventually escalating into bizarre and at times quite surreal guerilla-warfare style tactics (including distributing salmonella bacteria on local salad bars and produce stands [Carter 1990, 222; Urban 2005]). By 1986, the state attorney general concluded that Rajneeshpuram—as a uniquely hybrid kind of "sacred yet secular space"—violated both state and federal constitutions because of its non-separation of church and state. Indeed, the attorney concluded, it represented a "total fusion of government and religious functions" (Gordon 1987, 127). Rajneesh and several top disciples, meanwhile, had come under investigation for a stunning array of other criminal charges including counts of electronic eavesdropping, immigration conspiracy, lying to federal officials, first degree assault, attempted murder, burglary, racketeering, and arson (Carter 1990, 222-237). Deported from the United States and refused entry into almost every country to which he applied, Rajneesh return to India in 1987.

The Apotheosis of a Fallen New Age Guru: The Rebirth of "Osho" and the Creation of the Osho International Meditation Resort

Ironically, however, Rajneesh became even more popular after the scandalous collapse of the Oregon community and his return to the original Pune ashram. Assuming the new name of "Osho" (a Japanese

title for a Buddhist priest), he established a new and explicitly global religious community in Pune, which is today known as the Osho International Meditation Resort. Offering a vast array of spiritual practices drawn from East and West in a luxurious resort setting, the new Osho resort promises to put the ideal of Zorba the Buddha into practice for an international audience of spiritual seekers. As Osho famously put it:

[m]y concept[ion] of the new man is that he will be Zorba the Greek and he will also be Gautam the Buddha. The new man will be Zorba the Buddha. He will be sensuous and spiritual – physical, utterly physical, in the body, in the senses, enjoying the body and all that the body makes possible, and still a great consciousness...He will be Christ and Epicurus together (2000, 217).

The present Osho resort is an explicit attempt to put this Zorba the Buddha ideal into lived practice in unique kind of materially-spiritual space. In January 2013, I interviewed one of the current members of the governing board or “inner circle” of the resort, Swami Amrito (aka George Meredith), who strongly emphasized that this is neither an ashram nor a luxury hotel, but rather a “*Meditation Resort*.” It is, as he put it, an ideal wedding of *both* a sacred space for the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment *and* an attractive physical space for the enjoyment of sensual pleasure.³

Today, the Osho resort is advertised as a spiritual-sensual paradise that boasts luxury accommodations, a swimming pool, a Jacuzzi, “Zennis” courts, and the “Zorba the Buddha” poolside eatery, among its many other attractions. “The 60 room guesthouse would put most five-star hotels to shame,” proclaims an advertisement for the resort, quoting a review from *India Today* (Osho International Meditation Resort 2013). According to the Osho.com website, “[t]his lush contemporary 28-acre campus is a tropical oasis where nature and the 21st Century blend seamlessly, both within and without. With its white marble pathways, elegant black buildings, abundant foliage and Olympic-sized swimming pool, it is the perfect setting to take time out for yourself” (Osho.com 2013). *Elle Magazine* described the resort in equally glowing terms, as a unique mix of sacred space and five star accommodations, of spiritual wisdom and physical comfort: “[t]he atmosphere is really like a fairy tale. A paradise where all your emotional, bodily and spiritual needs are met” (Osho.com 2013).

³Swami Amrito, interviewed at the Osho Resort, January 29, 2013.

Yet the Osho resort is by no means simply a tourist holiday resort; it is also a remarkably diverse, eclectic and global spiritual center that offers every imaginable style of meditative, contemplative and psychological technique. Indeed, the resort describes itself as “the largest center in the world for meditation and personal growth processes,” encompassing “all the current western therapy approaches, the healing arts of East and West, esoteric sciences, creative arts, centering and martial arts, Tantra, Zen, Sufism, and Meditative Therapies” (Osho.com 2013). To give just one example of a day at the resort while I was there at the end of 2011: On December 31, the following spiritual offerings were available to guests: Vinyasa Flow, Tai Chi, Zen Archery, Whirling Celebration, Chakra Breathing Meditation, Vipassana Meditation, Dance Celebration, Laughing Drums Meditation, Acu- Energetics, Nadabrahma Meditation, Kundalini Meditation, and a New Year’s Eve Party. The next two days included an even broader array of offerings, such as Chi Kung, Zennis, Emotional Freedom, Nataraj Meditation, No Dimension Meditation, Mahamudra Meditation, Variety Show, Men and Women on the Path of Love, No-Mind, Art Therapist Intensive, and Jazz Café (Osho International Meditation Resort 2011-2012).

The Osho resort and its manifold spiritual and psychological offerings are not, however, inexpensive. Simply entering the resort of a day as a visitor involves a number of fees, including: a registration free (which includes a mandatory HIV test), an entry fee, purchase of red and white robes to be worn inside the resort—all totaling roughly \$100 for a single day visit, not including additional fees for using the swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna and gym. Those who choose to stay at the Osho Guesthouse will pay roughly the same rates as those staying at five star hotels in India, well over \$100 USD per night during the regular season. Courses at the Multiversity are also not inexpensive, ranging from a few hundred to over a thousand USD depending on the type and length of a particular course. For example, a six-day “Tantra Intensive” course offered in January 2013 cost 50,750 rupees, at that time a little over \$1000 USD (Osho Multiversity 2013).

The eclectic spiritual offerings and high cost of the resort are largely reflected in its current clientele. By my count during several trips between 2011 and 2013, roughly 75% of the visitors at the resort were non-Indian; and of these, more than half were Europeans, followed by smaller numbers of American, British, Brazilian, Israeli and Japanese guests. My estimates were confirmed by Swami Amrito when I asked him about the demographics of the resort in 2013. The Indian guests were almost entirely wealthy middle and upper class (It is worth noting, however, that the lower-end working staff at the resort—including

cleaning, janitorial, food service, and laundry staff—was 100% South Asian, and by no means upper class). While the early Pune ashram of the 1970s had attracted large numbers of hippies, young people and spiritual seekers backpacking around India, the present Osho resort tends to draw a far more affluent clientele, largely screening out those who can't afford the relatively high entrance fees and costs of the various courses. More than one local businessman told me that they believe this to be one reason why the resort now draws fewer (though wealthier) visitors than it had in previous decades—a charge that critics of the current leadership have echoed, as well (Joshi 2012).

Like its eclectic spiritual offerings and its international clientele, the organizational and financial structure of the Osho resort is also quite global and multifaceted. Already from the early years of the first Rajneesh ashram in Pune, the movement had grown into a complex transnational business network, establishing financial centers in London and Zurich in addition to those in India (Carter 1990, 81). During the Oregon years of the 1980s, this global network expanded rapidly through an extremely complex interlocking system of corporate entities, such as the Rajneesh Foundation International (RFI), the Rajneesh Investment Corporation (RIC), the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune (RNSIC), and numerous others (Gordon 1987, 116-117). Today, this intricate network of global corporate entities continues in perhaps an even more complex form, with the legal rights to Osho's trademarks and copyrights held in Zurich and its international publishing headquarters located in New York City (Raval 2000). According to *India Today*, the "Osho.Inc" empire now includes over "750 meditation centres across 80 countries ... 1500 books published in 40 languages; 3.5 million copies sold last year; 400 tapes of music and sermons; 200,000 copies sold every year; 800 signature paintings; 10,000 exclusive photographs; diamond robes and accessories, Rolls Royce fleet and properties" (Raval, 2000).

The complex corporate structure of the Osho empire has not, however, gone without its own challenges. Like other global corporations, the movement has been enmeshed in numerous legal disputes, including a struggle over the name "Osho" itself. According to the Osho International Foundation (OIF)—which claims ownership of all Osho-related works, photos, symbols and titles—Osho's materials are trademarked, copyright and "branded" like those of any other multinational corporation: "Osho and the foundation he selected have always used these symbols and marks to identify—or in today's language, to 'brand'—every aspect of his work: books, meditations, buildings, foundations, centers" (Osho International Foundation 2009). Thus, when a rival group based in New Delhi called the Osho Dhyana Mandir began to use "Osho" in its domain name, oshoworld.com, the Osho International Foundation promptly filed suit, claiming sole rights

to title. Although the US Patent and Trademark Office later ruled that the name “Osho” cannot be trademarked (Raval 2000), the OIF continues to dispute this in its various on-line literature (Osho International Foundation 2009). Meanwhile, the (mostly Indian-based) critics of the Pune community charge that the (mostly British and European) leaders of the resort are also slowly selling off portions of this valuable property and covertly transferring the assets to shadow corporate entities in other cities (Joshi 2012).

The Osho Resort as a Uniquely Embodied and Postmodern Sacred Space

The unique form of sacred space that we find at the Osho resort is very much an *embodied, sensual and material* space. All those who enter the resort—whether for a luxury tourist visit or for a spiritual retreat—are marked physically in several ways. First, before even entering the resort, all visitors must take an HIV test, which is performed on the spot by providing a blood sample. Interestingly, up to 1980s, the Rajneesh movement was infamous for its promiscuous sexuality and Neo-Tantric excesses, but following the AIDs epidemic, it became increasingly concerned with sexual hygiene (Gordon 1987, 131). Second, while inside the grounds, all visitors and residents are marked by special robes, maroon for daytime and white for evening use. Finally, physical hygiene is also a central concern of the resort, and all visitors are given special instructions and an introductory video on how to wash their hands, how to place food on their trays, how to conduct themselves physically in the meditation hall, and so on. Meanwhile, handling currency is forbidden inside the grounds, and the stated rationale is that paper money is unhygienic.

Two of the main focal points of spiritual practice at the resort are also very much *embodied* spaces: the first is a large dance pavilion, where guests perform an array of dance arts from around the world, ranging from the Sufi whirling dervishes to the sacred dance techniques of George Gurdjieff to popular Bollywood styles. Indeed, dance in every possible form is a central part of Osho’s uniquely embodied spirituality and is many ways a key intersection between *physical fun and religious transcendence* that is the heart of the “Zorba the Buddha” ideal. As Rajneesh put it in a series of lectures from 1977, “Mentation alone won’t do: the body has to be brought in. That is why, in *my* meditation techniques, I do not take you as divided: you are one...If your mind is feeling happy, allow your body to dance. Don’t create a division. Let yourself come deep down into the body, and allow the body to flow to your innermost core. Become a flow!” (1980, 20).

The second focal point is the meditation hall, a huge pyramid structure with white marble floors. Here each morning members perform Osho's unique brand of "Dynamic Meditation," an extremely physical style of meditation intended to "melt our blocks" by "active" means (Rajneesh 1980, 20). Lasting an hour, and involving quite an aerobic workout, Dynamic Meditation involves five distinct stages. It begins with form of "chaotic breathing" or intense, free-form breathing in which one avoids falling into any particular pattern or repetition; second, there is a "freak out" stage in which one vents all emotions in a kind of primal scream therapy; third follows a period of jumping up and down with hands stretched above the head while reciting the Sufi word "Hu!" meaning "He," one of the names of God; fourth, there is a period of stillness in which one remains frozen in whatever position one happens to be at that moment; and finally, there is a period of private, free-form dance, in which one simply dances with oneself in whatever way one chooses. As Rajneesh himself described his Dynamic Meditation, this is a new bodily technique adapted to the new bodily situation of modern human beings, who now live in a highly technological society and a largely artificial environment that demands radical catharsis:

Modern man is a very new phenomenon. No traditional method can be used exactly as it exists because modern man never existed before. ... [T]he body has changed so much. It is not as natural as it was in the days when Patanjali developed his system of yoga. It is absolutely different. It is so drugged that no traditional method can be helpful....I use chaotic methods rather than systematic ones because a chaotic method is very helpful in pushing the center down from the brain. ...Through chaotic methods the brain is nullified. ...If you do my method of Dynamic Meditation vigorously, unsystematically, chaotically, your center moves to the heart. Then there is a catharsis (1977, 41-2).

The Osho resort represents a profoundly hybrid and "spiritually-material" form of sacred space that appears to be remarkably well suited to a twenty-first century audience of spiritual seekers. In many ways, Osho's radically eclectic, parodic, and iconoclastic practices embody what Paul Heelas calls a kind of "postmodern spirituality," uniquely adapted to the shifting religious tastes of a global clientele (1998, 4). Although the term "postmodernism" has been defined in wildly different and often contradictory ways, most authors agree that postmodernism is characterized above all by its emphasis on play, chance, irony, and indeterminacy over the ideals of purpose, design or determinacy (Harvey 1990, 43-44). It tends, moreover, to accept and

embrace rather than resist the chaos of the consumer marketplace. As Terry Eagleton famously put it: “the typical postmodern artifact is playful, self-ironizing and even schizoid.... [I]t reacts to the austere autonomy of high modernism by impudently embracing the language of commerce and the commodity. Its stance toward tradition is one of irreverent pastiche” (Eagleton 1987; see Jameson 1990). Finally, postmodernism also tends to celebrate the body and physical pleasure, affirming the immediacy of sensual experience over asceticism or self-denial: “The new consumption ethic...celebrated living for the moment, hedonism, self-expression, the body beautiful, paganism, freedom from social obligations [and] the exotica of faraway places” (Featherstone 1991, 112).

As Paul Heelas suggests, many of these aspects of postmodernity are reflected in contemporary forms of spirituality, as well. Postmodern religious phenomena, as he describes them, tend to embrace these themes of indeterminacy, eclecticism, irony, physical pleasure, and consumerism, emphasizing the radical freedom of the religious individual to pick and choose from a vast array of diverse spiritual commodities in the global supermarket of cultures:

Postmodern religion...is very much in the hands of the ‘free’ subject....The deregulation of the religious realm, combined with the cultural emphasis on freedom and choice, results in the intermingled, interfused forms of religious – or ‘religious-cum-secular’ life which exist beyond the tradition-regulated church and chapel. People...are positively encouraged to experience their ‘autonomy’ to draw on what has diffused through the culture....They – so to speak – raid the world, drawing on whatever is felt desirable: the religious (perhaps shamanism and Christianity); the religious and the non-religious (perhaps yoga and champagne)...My favorite example is Zennis, a fusion of Zen and tennis. (1998, 5)

Osho himself was quite explicit about the radically postmodern and consumerist nature of his teachings. Irony, hybridity, playfulness and indeterminacy are all themes that run through his discourses from the 1960s onward. As Osho put it, in his characteristically satirical, iconoclastic and contradictory way, “I have been consistently inconsistent so that you will never be able to make a dogma out of me. You will simply go nuts if you try. I am leaving something really terrible for scholars; they will not be able to make any sense out of me. They will go nuts—and they deserve it, they should go nuts!” (2000, 17). Moreover, from his first teachings in India until his rise to celebrity in 1980s America, he not only conspicuously displayed but also *made fun of* his own growing wealth. As Rajneesh frankly stated in an interview

featured on CBS's *60 Minutes*, "I *sell* contentment. I *sell* enlightenment" (Associated Press 1985). This unapologetically commercial attitude was also reflected in a famous bumper sticker sold at the Oregon Ranch in the 1980s: "Jesus Saves, Moses Invests, Bhagwan Spends!" (Gordon 1987, 114). In a way, this is pure Osho-Rajneesh: shrewd humor, self-parody, and outrageous embrace of consumerism all in one. As we see in his *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic*, even his own infamous habit of collecting Rolls Royces could be an object of self-parody and an opportunity for a funny but oddly telling bit of satire:

Americans think they are the richest people in the world. But I created a simple joke with ninety-three Rolls Royces, and all their pride was gone. Even the president was jealous....I don't need ninety-three Rolls-Royces. It was a practical joke....People are sad, jealous, and thinking that Rolls-Royces don't fit with spirituality. I don't see that there is any contradiction...In fact, sitting in a bullock cart it is very difficult to be meditative. A Rolls Royce is the best for spiritual growth. (2000, 157)

The last fifty years have surely witnessed no shortage of wealthy spiritual leaders who have reaped vast profits from their global religious enterprises; we need only think of Christian televangelists such as Pat Robertson and Joel Osteen, global Hindu gurus such as Sathya Sai Baba and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, or new religious movements such as the Church of Scientology (Srinivas 2010; Urban 2010). Yet Osho was arguably the first global guru to *openly and unapologetically embrace* the capitalist nature of his spirituality while at the same time *making fun of it* in the very same breath.

Conclusions: The Body and Sacred Space in a Late Capitalist Global Context

To conclude, I would like to suggest that the Osho resort not only offers some critical insights into the nature of sacred space in this one particular site in South Asia but also opens much broader insights into the complex dynamics of sacred space and bodily practice in the context of globalization and the current economic system that has been variously called "late," "de-territorialized" or "disorganized capitalism" (Mandel 1975; Jameson 1990; Harvey 1990; Lash and Urry 1987). If sacred space acts as a kind of "focusing lens" in Smith's sense, highlighting what is most significant to a given community, then the unique sacred space of the Osho resort also helps focus on the larger dynamics of global tourism, sensual pleasure, and transnational capitalism, which are particularly significant to this community.

Like the term postmodernism, the phrases late capitalism and disorganized capitalism have been used in many different ways by different theorists, but most often they refer to the shift from modern industrial or “Fordist” capitalism to the new forms of global capitalism that emerged following World War II, and above all since the 1960s and 70s (Harvey 1990). As Scott Lash and John Urry argue, the early “modernist” or “organized” forms of capitalism that dominated up until the mid-twentieth century were characterized primarily by the centralization of industrial banking and commercial capital in regulated national markets; by the emergence of complex managerial hierarchies; and by the concentration of capitalist relations within relatively few industries and regions. Conversely, the “disorganized” or “postmodern” forms of capitalism that emerged since the 1960s and 1970s are characterized more by the de-concentration of corporate power away from national markets and the increasing internationalization of capital; by the increasing independence of large monopolies from state regulation; and by cultural fragmentation and pluralism coupled with the undermining of traditional class or national identities (Lash and Urry 1987; Harvey 1990, 175-76). As Fredric Jameson points out, however, late capitalism is by not a “post-capitalist” system, but an even “purer “and more intense form of *hyper-capitalism* that expands the processes of commodification to more and more aspects of human culture and life – including religion itself (Jameson 1990, 26; Mandel 1975, 387). Even “sacred spaces,” in other words, become absorbed into the ostensibly “secular” space of the marketplace: “the tendency in modern societies is for religion to become a private leisure pursuit purchased in the market like any other consumer culture lifestyle” (Featherstone 1991, 110-11).

As David Harvey argues, moreover, the condition of late capitalism has also brought with it a profound shift in our experience of space and time – a kind of “space-time compression.” With the ever increasing speed of global travel, transportation, and commerce, spatial barriers have largely collapsed in a new world of rapid transit and virtually instant communication that have fundamentally altered our sense of space itself:

The satellite communications systems deployed since the early 1970s have rendered the unit cost and time of communication invariant with respect to distance...It is now possible for a large multinational corporation ... to operate plants with simultaneous decision making with respect to financial, market, input costs, quality control and labour processes in more than fifty different locations across the globe. Mass television ownership coupled with satellite communication makes it possible to experience a rush of images from different spaces almost simultaneously, collapsing the world's

spaces into a series of images on a television screen. The whole world can watch the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the fall of a dictator, a political summit, a deadly tragedy...while mass tourism, films made in spectacular locations, make a wide range of simulated or vicarious experiences of what the world contains available to many people....

We have, in short, witnessed another fierce round in that process of annihilation of space through time that has always lain at the center of capitalism's dynamic (Harvey 1990, 293).

The Osho-Rajneesh movement not only emerged *simultaneously* with this shift from organized to late capitalism (during the 1960s and 70s), but also with its open embrace of consumption, its transnational audience, and its wildly eclectic practices, it also very much *embodies* a new kind of late capitalist spirituality. With its fusion of East and West, its hordes of spiritual tourists from around the globe, its complex multinational financial structure, and its hybrid mix of sacred and commercial space, the Osho resort itself is in many ways an epitome—indeed an epicenter—of the sort of late capitalist space-time compression that Harvey is describing.

The Osho movement offers profound insights into the complex nature of globalization in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Tulasi Srinivas has persuasively argued in her recent work on the Sathya Sai Baba movement, Indian-based movements can offer a powerful alternative to the usual narratives of globalization. Cultural ideologies, she suggests, flow not only from “the West to the rest” but also from India and other parts of Asia, revealing a far more dynamic and multi-directional global flow of religious forms (2010, 7). Going still further, I would suggest that the Osho-Rajneesh movement is neither a mere response to Western-style globalization nor a global movement that happens to have emerged from South Asia. Rather, this is much better understood in Appadurai's sense as a key node in a more dynamic network of people, ideas and capital circulating through multiple sites across the globe. Not merely a transnational movement, the Osho community is an explicitly “post-national movement” in Appadurai's sense (1990, 22). As Osho, himself, put it in his *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic*,

[t]he days of the nation are over...the days of the politicians are over. We are moving into a tremendously new world, a new phase of humanity – and this phase is that there can only be one world now, only one single humanity...Now there is no need to ask for another world; we are capable of creating paradise here on this earth...It is a meeting place of East and West (2000, 213).

Yet with its complex multinational organization and its unapologetic embrace of consumerism, the Osho resort is also uniquely adapted to the dynamics of global capitalism. This is no doubt a key to its success and its appeal to affluent Western tourists, to India's burgeoning middle class, and to any other seekers looking for an attractive blend of exotic Eastern spirituality with the comforts of an international luxury hotel. As we see in the ongoing debates over Osho/ Rajneesh's legacy, and the complex legal battles over the rights to his name and trademarks, the movement has inherited the more problematic and conflicted aspects of global capitalism, as well (Raval 2000, Joshi 2012). Understood as a "focusing lens," in Smith's sense, the unique form of sacred space embodied in the Osho resort is thus an ideal place to study the complex dynamics of global spirituality in the twenty-first century.

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